

Glossary of Terms

The following terms are defined according to their intended use in this document.

Accessibility — A measure of the ability to travel easily among various places.

Access to Opportunity — Living within walking distance or with transit access to services, employment opportunities, education, amenities, and other key determinants of social, economic, and physical well-being.

Action — A provision or task to implement adopted policies.

Active Living — Promotion of physical activity, including walking and bicycling, to address health and personal well-being, focusing on how the built environment — including neighborhoods, transportation systems, buildings, parks and open space — can contribute to more daily movement and activity.

Activity Unit — A measure of total activity that combines the number of jobs and population.

Affiliated Area — An area within the designated urban growth area that has been identified by an adjacent city as an area for future annexation and/or joint planning. (See also Potential Annexation Area.)

Affordable Housing — Commonly defined in terms of housing costs as a percentage of household income. Housing is considered unaffordable when a household's monthly housing costs exceed a certain threshold — most commonly 30% of gross income — thereby reducing the budget available for basic necessities and other household expenses.

Air Toxics — Airborne chemicals found to be harmful to human health, and to plants and animals. Examples include toluene, xylene, benzene, and formaldehyde.

Annexation — A procedure for bringing unincorporated areas into a city, town, or additional service areas into a special purpose district. An annexation area is usually adjacent to an incorporated city, town, or a special purpose district. Washington State law governs the procedures for annexation.

Area Median Income — The household income for the median, or middle, household in a city, county or region. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development calculates median income for each metropolitan region. These are used to determine income limits for government affordable housing programs.

Best Available Science — The most up-to-date information available for planning and development decision-making. Defined and required by the Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70A.172).

Brownfield — A previously developed property or site – often used for industrial activity – that now is underutilized or not in active use, on land that is either contaminated or perceived as contaminated.

Buildable Lands Analysis — An assessment of the amount of land needed for commercial, industrial, and housing development, as required by the Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70A.215). Buildable lands programs are to determine whether a county and its cities are achieving urban densities within the urban growth area by comparing adopted plans with actual growth.

Built Environment — Refers to the human-created surroundings that provide the setting for human activity, ranging from large-scale civic districts, commercial and industrial buildings, to neighborhoods and individual homes.

Centers — A defined focal area within a city or community that is a priority for local planning and infrastructure. VISION 2050 identifies scales of mixed-use centers, which have a mix of housing, employment, retail and entertainment uses and are served by multiple transportation options. Industrial centers concentrate and preserve manufacturing and industrial lands. Regional centers are formally designated by PSRC.

Certification — Formal process by which PSRC recognizes the consistency of local transportation-related planning provisions with the Regional Transportation Plan and conformity with state planning requirements.

Cities and Towns — A regional geography in VISION 2050 that refers to cities and towns with smaller downtown and local centers and may be served by local transit.

Compact Urban Communities — Urban locations offering transportation, housing, and shopping choices that reduce the need for automobile travel and support an efficient development pattern.

Comprehensive Plan — A local plan required by the state Growth Management Act to address land use, housing, transportation, utilities, and capital facilities, and other elements, to guide growth and development for a 20-year period (RCW 36.70A).

Concurrency — A state planning requirement to ensure that needed services and facilities are in place by the time development is completed and to be occupied, or that funding has been committed to provide such services within six years.

Conservation — The management of resources – such as water and energy – in order to eliminate waste or maximize efficiency of use.

Consistency — The degree of compatibility or agreement among planning provisions. The Growth Management Act addresses consistency in three ways: (1) internal consistency of comprehensive plans, (2) consistency of zoning and regulations with the comprehensive plan, and (3) consistency with other jurisdictions.

Core City — A regional geography within VISION 2050 that refers to a city that contains one or more regionally designated centers and connected to the high-capacity transit network.

Countywide Center — Countywide growth centers serve important roles as places for concentrating jobs, housing, shopping, and recreational opportunities. Countywide industrial centers serve as important local industrial areas. Countywide centers are designated by the countywide planning groups.



Countywide Planning Group — A body of elected officials set up in each county to coordinate growth management planning efforts among the county and its cities.

King County: Growth Management Planning Council

Kitsap County: Kitsap Regional Coordinating Council

Pierce County: Pierce County Regional Council

Snohomish County: Snohomish County Tomorrow

Countywide Planning Policy — An adopted provision developed collaboratively between the county government and the local cities and towns within that county. Countywide planning policies provide a common framework for individual comprehensive plans prepared by each local jurisdiction.

Displacement — The involuntary relocation of current residents or businesses from their current residence. This is a different phenomenon than when property owners voluntarily sell their interests to capture an increase in value. Physical displacement is the result of eviction, acquisition, rehabilitation, or demolition of property, or the expiration of covenants on rent- or income-restricted housing. Economic displacement occurs when residents and businesses can no longer afford escalating housing costs. Cultural displacement occurs when people choose to move because their neighbors and culturally related businesses have left the area.

Energy Management Technology — Tools and practices that examine trends and patterns in energy operations and usage and identify cost effective efficiencies and conservation mechanisms. New technologies may include alternative and renewable energy sources.

Equity (also Social Equity) — All people can attain the resources and opportunities that improve their quality of life and enable them to reach full potential. Those affected by poverty, communities of color, and historically marginalized communities are engaged in decision-making processes, planning, and policy making.

Equitable Development/Equitable Growth — Public and private investments, programs, and policies in neighborhoods to meet the needs of marginalized populations and to reduce disparities, providing access to quality education, living wage employment, healthy environment, affordable housing and transportation.

Functional Plan — A specialized plan focusing on a single topic area. It may contain more detailed information on actions, projects and programs – based on the policies and provisions of a more generalized overall plan. The Regional Transportation Plan and the Regional Economic Strategy are both functional plans that implement VISION 2050.

Green Building (also: Green Design) — Building design that yields environmental benefits, such as savings in energy, building materials, and water consumption, or reduced waste generation. Green development minimizes energy consumption, pollution, and the generation of wastes, while maximizing the re-use of materials and creating healthful indoor environments.

Green Stormwater Infrastructure — A stormwater management system that mimics nature using vegetation, soils, and natural processes to clean, soak up, and store water.

Greenhouse Gas — Components of the atmosphere which contribute to global warming, including carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, and fluorinated gases. Human activities have added to the levels of most of these naturally occurring gases.

Habitats and Species of Local Importance — Those habitats and species determined locally as important for maintaining fish and wildlife populations over the long term.

Hazards, Natural and Climate — Natural hazards are naturally occurring physical phenomena caused either by rapid or slow onset events which can be geophysical (earthquakes, landslides, tsunamis and volcanic activity), hydrological (avalanches and floods), climatological (extreme temperatures, drought and wildfires), meteorological (cyclones and storms/wave surges) or biological (disease epidemics and insect/animal plagues).

Health Equity — The attainment of the highest level of health for all people. (Healthy People 2020)

Healthy Disparity — A gap or difference in health status between different groups of people, including race, income, education and geographic location. This health difference is closely linked with social, economic, and/or environmental disadvantage. (Healthy People 2020)



High Capacity Transit Communities — A regional geography within VISION 2050 that refers to cities and unincorporated areas that are connected to the regional high-capacity transit system.

High-Capacity Transit Station Areas — Areas within ½ a mile of existing or planned light rail and streetcar stations, commuter rail stations, ferry terminals, and within ¼ mile of all bus rapid transit stations.

High-Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) — A motor vehicle with two or more people traveling in it. Includes carpools, vanpools, and transit. A high-occupancy vehicle lane refers to a highway and arterial lane restricted to vehicles carrying multiple occupants or passengers (with the exception of motorcycles).

Historically Marginalized Communities — Include, but are not limited to, native and Indigenous peoples, people of color, immigrants and refugees, people with low incomes, those with disabilities and health conditions, and people with limited English proficiency.

Housing Affordability — Refers to the balance (or imbalance) between incomes and housing costs within a community or region. A common measurement compares the number of households in certain income categories to the number of units in the market that are affordable at 30% of gross income.

Incompatible Land Uses — Facilities or activities on a site that have negative effects on adjacent properties.

Indian Reservation Lands — Reserved homelands that are subject to the jurisdiction of each tribal government and have immense value as the home of the region's native cultures and traditions.

Infill Development — Projects that use vacant or underutilized land in areas that were previously developed.

Intelligent Transportation Systems — The application of advanced technology to current transportation problems, including incident detection, signal coordination, real-time information, and other technology.

Jobs-Housing Balance — A planning concept which advocates that housing and employment be located closer together, with an emphasis on matching housing options with nearby jobs, so workers have shorter commutes or can eliminate vehicle trips altogether.

Joint Planning — Cooperative planning between two or more jurisdictions or agencies.

Level-of-Service Standard — Measures of the minimum amount of a public facility that must be provided to meet that community's basic needs and expectations. The Growth Management Act requires jurisdictions to establish LOS for transportation-related facilities (RCW 36.70A.070(6)(a)).

Living-Wage Jobs — Jobs that pay enough to meet the basic needs and costs of supporting a family or individual independently. Factors for determining living-wage jobs include housing, food, transportation, utilities, health care, child care, and recreation.

Local Centers — Centers that are designated in local comprehensive plans and provide local gathering places, serve as community hubs, and are often appropriate places for additional growth and focal points for services.

Low-Impact Development — Site design techniques to maintain the natural, pre-developed ability of a site to manage stormwater. More broadly, it refers to a range of development techniques that have minimal environmental or energy-related impacts.

Manufacturing/Industrial Center — An area of intensive manufacturing and/or industrial activity formally designated by PSRC. Manufacturing/industrial centers include concentrations of industrial land use, employment, and freight infrastructure.

Major Military Installations — A regional geography within VISION 2050 that refers to installations with more than 5,000 enlisted and service personnel.

Metropolitan City — A regional geography in VISION 2050 that refers to one of the area's five central cities: Bellevue, Bremerton, Everett, Seattle, and Tacoma.



Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

— The federally-mandated forum for cooperative transportation decision-making in a metropolitan area.

Middle Density Housing — A range of housing types – from duplexes to townhomes to low-rise multifamily developments – that bridge a gap between single-family housing and more intense multifamily and commercial areas. The relatively small share of these housing types is sometimes called the “missing middle.”

Mixed-Use Development — Projects or districts that include residential, commercial, and business accommodations. Vertical mixed-use development refers to buildings that have multiple uses in a single structure, such as ground-floor retail, offices, and residences. Horizontal mixed-use development refers to districts where zoning allows for different uses to be in adjacent buildings and complexes.

Mode — A particular form of travel. For example, walking, bicycling, driving alone, carpool or vanpool, bus, train, ferry, or airplane.

Mode Split — A term that describes the relative number of people using various forms – or modes – of transportation. Frequently used to describe the percentage of people using private automobiles as opposed to the percentage using transit.

Monitoring — An organized process for gathering and assessing information related to achieving established goals and policies. The process uses performance indicators to show progress toward, movement away from, or static state in policy implementation or policy achievement. Implementation monitoring tracks whether agreed-upon actions are taking place. Performance monitoring assesses whether desired results are achieved.

Multimodal — Those issues or activities which involve or affect more than one form – or mode – of transportation, including transportation connections, choices, cooperation, and coordination of various modes.

Multimodal Concurrency — Addressing transportation system performance by taking into account land development and transportation solutions that provide alternatives to driving alone. Moves beyond the assessment of vehicle travel to focus more on the people-moving capacity of the system.

Multicounty Planning Policy (MPP) — An official statement adopted in VISION 2050 to provide guidance for regional decision-making, as well as a common framework for countywide planning policies and local comprehensive plans. Multicounty planning policies are required by the Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70A.210(7))

Nonmotorized — Generally refers to bicycle, pedestrian, and other modes of transportation not involving a motor vehicle.

Office of Financial Management — State agency responsible for preparing population forecasts used by counties and their cities in development of local comprehensive plans.

Open Space — A range of green places, including natural and resource areas (such as forests), recreational areas (such as parks and trails), and other areas set aside from development (such as plazas).

Particulate Matter — A pollutant consisting of liquid and solid particles in the air, such as soot, dust, and smoke. Particulate matter pollution includes inhalable coarse particles of 10 micrometers or less in diameter (PM10), and fine particles of 2.5 micrometers or less in diameter (PM2.5). These particles may pose serious health problems, such as heart and lung ailments, as well as environmental consequences, such as reduced visibility. Automobiles, particularly those fueled with diesel, are a significant source of particulate matter.

Pedestrian-Oriented Development — The development and siting of housing, commercial space, services, and job opportunities in a manner that accommodates walking. Such development is intended to create more vibrant urban areas and to reduce dependency on automobile travel.

Potential Annexation Area — An urban area adjacent to an existing city that the municipality has identified for future inclusion as part of the city. (See also Affiliated Areas.)



Preserve — To maintain intact or unchanged. In environmental planning, to set aside an environmental feature or natural resource to prevent its alteration.

Pricing — A strategy for directly charging users of transportation systems. It may be used to manage demand for the facility, cover costs, and/or achieve other policy objectives, such as optimizing facility use. Also known as congestion pricing, value pricing, and variable pricing.

Public Services — Facilities and infrastructure, including sanitary and storm sewer systems, water supply, energy, telecommunications, public safety and emergency services, schools, libraries, and other facilities.

Puget Sound Clean Air Agency — A special purpose agency serving King, Kitsap, Pierce, and Snohomish counties and their respective cities and towns to ensure the residents of the region have clean air to breathe. Chartered by state law in 1967 (RCW 70.94), the agency works in partnership with the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Washington State Department of Ecology, and PSRC.

Purchase of Development Rights — Programs through which local governments restrict development by purchasing rights to develop from private landholders.

Quality of Life — A broad multi-dimensional concept comprised of two domains—“individual health and well-being”, and “neighborhood livability”. The first domain includes physical health and social, emotional and mental well-being. The second relates to those rich opportunities in our neighborhoods affording one to fully enjoy life, such as access to living wage jobs, affordable housing, reliable transit, good schools, safe parks and protected natural areas, etc. (CDC)

Regional Economic Strategy — The functional economic strategy for VISION 2050. It also serves as the federally required comprehensive economic development strategy for the four-county central Puget Sound region.

Regional Geography — Groupings of cities and unincorporated areas used for planning and growth distribution purposes in the Regional Growth Strategy. Regional geographies include Metropolitan Cities, Core Cities, High Capacity Transit (HCT) Communities, Cities & Towns, Urban Unincorporated Areas, Rural, Resource Lands, Indian Reservation Lands, and Major Military Installations.

Regional Growth Center — A mixed-use center formally designated by PSRC that includes housing, employment, retail and entertainment uses. Regional growth centers are pedestrian-oriented, which allows people to walk to different destinations or attractions and are well-served by transit. Regional growth centers are planned for significant additional growth.

Regional Growth Strategy — The approach for distributing population and employment growth within the four-county central Puget Sound region.

Regional Service Provider — A district that provides a service to a multicounty area, countywide, or to an extensive subarea within a county.

Regional Transportation Plan — A detailed 20-year transportation plan that guides future regional investments and responds to legal mandates contained in federal transportation legislation, the Clean Air Act Amendments, the Washington Growth Management Act, and Regional Transportation Planning Organization legislation.

Regional Transportation Planning Organization — Under state law, the body responsible for long-range, region-wide transportation planning. PSRC serves as the Regional Transportation Planning Organization for the four-county central Puget Sound region.

Renewable Energy — Energy sources that can be regenerated and that are much less polluting than nuclear power or fossil fuels, such as wind, solar power, biomass, and hydropower.

Renewable Resource — A natural resource that can regenerate, either by itself or with human help, over a short to moderate time horizon, such as fish, food crops, and trees.



Resilience — The capacity of social, economic, and environmental systems to cope with a hazardous event or trend or disturbance, responding or reorganizing in ways that maintain their essential function, identity, and structure, while also maintaining the capacity for adaptation, learning, and transformation.

Resource Lands — Lands that support resource-based industries, such as timber harvesting and farming. Under the Growth Management Act, the collective term for forest, agricultural, and mineral lands. Also a defined regional geography in VISION 2050.

Rural Area — Outside the urban growth area, rural lands contain a mix of low-density residential development, agriculture, forests, open space, and natural areas, as well as recreation uses. Counties and adjacent small towns provide a limited number of public services to rural residents. Also a defined regional geography in VISION 2050.

Service District (Special Purpose/Service District) — Limited-purpose local governments separate from a city, town, or county government. Generally, they perform a single function though some do perform a limited number of functions. School districts and transit districts are examples of special service districts.

Single-Occupant Vehicle — A motor vehicle occupied by the driver only.

Solid Waste — Discarded material generated by individuals, households, organizations, and businesses.

Special Needs Housing — Housing arrangements for populations with special physical or other needs. These populations include: the elderly, disabled persons, people with medical conditions, homeless individuals and families, and displaced people.

Stormwater Management System — An infrastructure system that collects runoff from precipitation and redirects it from streets and other surfaces into facilities that store and release it – usually back into natural waterways.

Target (also Growth Target) — The number of residents, housing, or jobs that a jurisdiction is expected to plan for in its comprehensive plan. Growth targets are set by countywide planning groups for counties and cities to meet the Growth Management Act requirement to allocate urban growth that is projected for the succeeding twenty-year period (RCW 36.70A.110).

Transfer of Development Rights — A system that gives landowners the option of selling the rights to further develop the land. By selling development rights, a landowner gives up the right to develop his/her property, but the buyer could use the rights to develop another piece of land at a greater intensity than would otherwise be permitted.

Transit-Dependent — Individual(s) dependent on public transit to meet personal mobility needs (e.g., unable to drive, not a car owner, or not licensed to drive).

Transit-Oriented Development — The development of housing, commercial space, services, and job opportunities near public transportation. Such development is intended to reduce dependency on automobiles, as well as to improve mobility and access between residences, jobs, and services.

Transit Supportive Density — A concentration of housing and jobs within a defined area of land sufficient to support the frequent use of a given mode of public transit. The specific density that is considered transit supportive will vary based on the transit mode, location within a transit system, and mix of uses.

Transportation Demand Management — Transportation demand management (TDM) helps people use the transportation system more efficiently through education, incentives, products, and programs that remove barriers to non-drive-alone modes such as transit, carpool, vanpool, walking, biking, and teleworking.

Transportation Improvement Program — The multiyear program of transportation projects for highways, transit, and other modes. The regional Transportation Improvement Program consists of projects and programs drawn from the Regional Transportation Plan, as well as from local plans and the transportation programs of other agencies in the region.



Underutilized Land — Land that is either vacant or could accommodate a denser level of development than currently exists, like a surface parking lot in a dense residential neighborhood.

Unincorporated Urban Growth Area — Areas under county jurisdiction within the designated urban growth area. Such areas are expected to develop at urban densities, and annex to a city or potentially form a new city at some point in the future.

Urban Form — The physical characteristics that make up built-up areas, including the shape, size, density and configuration of settlements.

Urban Growth Area — The area formally designated by a county, in consultation with its cities, to accommodate future development and growth.

Vehicle Fleet — All motor vehicles in active use, including private vehicles and vehicles operated by public agencies.

Vehicle Miles Traveled — A measurement of the total miles traveled by all vehicles for a specified time period. For transit, the number of vehicle miles operated on a given route, line, or network during a specified time period.

Vulnerable Populations — People who are unable to avoid or have difficulty recovering from the impacts of hazardous conditions because of factors such as limited resources or impaired physical health.

Walkshed — The area around a transit center, either measured as one-half-mile radius, a 10-minute walking distance, or a combination of the two. Used to measure the area in which walking or biking can serve as viable way to access a transit facility.

Watershed — All of the land and water that drains toward a water body.

Working Lands — Lands that are used as farms, ranchlands, timberlands, and mines.

